

Home

Contents

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## Records

Key Passage(s)   JLL Article(s)   Context

[Download key passages/title pages as a PDF](#)

[Kopeloff N, Kirby GH \(1923\)](#). Focal infection and mental disease. American Journal of Psychiatry 3:149-197.

**Key passages**

# AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY

## FOCAL INFECTION AND MENTAL DISEASE.\*

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Because of the difficulties of interpretation inherent in an investigation of this nature, it seemed desirable to reduce the study as nearly as possible to the terms of an experiment. Consequently, all patients were divided into two groups as nearly identical as possible. All members of one group received operative treatment for foci of infection in teeth, tonsils (and in some female cases) cervix, as indicated, while members of the other group had no surgical interference and could therefore be regarded as controls. In this way, operative treatment might be considered to be the crucial factor in this experiment and an evaluation of its influence on the course of the psychoses might thus be more readily established.

It was realized that rarely, if ever, can one psychotic patient be taken as a perfect control on another having the same diagnosis, yet this method alone permits of the isolation of the single factor of treatment. It might be argued that there was ample control material in the patients of the past and present years who had never been treated from the viewpoint of focal infection. Since it is well-known that any special attention serves to improve the status of a hospital population at any given time, it was considered much more satisfactory to have such a control group made up of patients observed at the same time by the same physicians and under the same living conditions and influences as the patients to be actively treated. The procedure followed therefore, after the diagnostic classification had been made and the infections determined, was to designate automatically that alternate patients be operated. An attempt was made to place in the two different groups, patients comparable as to sex, age, duration of psychosis, diagnosis, prognosis, and infective conditions.